

HENRY JAMES'S FAILURE AS A DRAMATIST
AS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS ADAPTATION OF
DAISY MILLER FOR THE STAGE

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the last two hundred years there have been a number of important American and English authors who, though already accomplished in other areas of literature, have attempted to write drama. Many of these men met with complete failure while others succeeded only in producing closet drama.

Coleridge's Osirio and The Fall of Robespierre, Byron's Sardanapulous and Manfred, and Shelley's The Cenci, are all examples of such failure. Tennyson, Hardy, Moore and nearer the present, Wolfe, are only a few of the others who attempted to write drama and who were also unsuccessful. Most of these authors, meeting with failure after one, perhaps two or three attempts at writing for the stage, gave up the drama and returned to their original literary forms. Few, however, attempted to write drama with so sustained an effort or with such fervor as Henry James. He, too, met with failure in the dramatic medium, but, unlike the others, he made repeated attempts throughout his life to write stage drama.

James's failure to meet the demands of the physical stage is strikingly ironic for a number of reasons. Why James, after so many attempts, was still unable to create stage drama is certainly puzzling. More of a puzzle, however, is the fact that, not only was he unable to write good original plays, but he was also unable, with any degree of success, to adapt his own already popular novels. Furthermore, many of James's novels--The Turn of the Screw (as The Innocents), A Sense of

the Past (as Berkley Square), Washington Square (as The Heiress), The Aspern Papers, The Tragic Muse, and The Wings of the Dove--have been recently and successfully adapted for the stage. On the other hand James once transformed one of his unsuccessful plays into a rather successful short story, thus adding to the irony.

Illustrative of James's unsuccessful attempts to adapt one of his novels for the stage is the play Daisy Miller: A Comedy. While the book, Daisy Miller: A Study, remains, as it was when it was first published, a successful novel, Daisy Miller: A Comedy was never produced and today is largely forgotten. This failure of James's first major attempt at playwriting was prophetic of his whole career as a playwright. In his lifetime he completed twelve plays and of these plays only five were printed while he was alive. Three of the remaining unpublished plays were produced on the London stage with less than moderate success, and one, Guy Domville, perhaps his most serious attempt as a playwright, was so badly treated by the London audience that James, appearing in answer to calls of "author, author" was hissed off the stage.¹

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to determine what factors were involved in James's failure as a dramatist and why, as exemplified by his adaptation of the novel, Daisy

¹Leon Edel, ed. The Complete Plays of Henry James, (London, 1949), p. 9.

Miller: A Study, he was unable to adapt his own novels for the stage.

Daisy Miller: A Comedy has been selected to illustrate James's difficulties with the dramatic form because in it one can most easily see James's theories of drama at work. When it was written, James was just beginning to write drama, and the extent to which he was to adhere to "rules of the drama" and the seriousness with which he took these "rules" is most apparent in this rather rough, unpolished work. Unlike his other adaptations of his novels, this one was written without suggestions by actors or managers and is better suited to a study of James's theories, since he made no changes to please an individual other than himself. That the play is an adaptation makes possible a comparison of the novel and the play and those aspects of the story which James felt necessary to change in order to make it dramatic.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAMES'S DRAMATIC THEORIES

James developed his theories of drama as well as his overwhelming desire to write for the stage over a long period of time and it is his relationship with the drama of his period which heavily influences the adaptation of his novel. In the first book of his autobiography, A Small Boy and Others, dealing with the first fourteen years of his life, a great portion is devoted to recounting his early experiences with the drama. In it he recalls his experiences at plays in New York, London, and

Paris. James's parents were ardent theatre-goers and operated on the theory that if the plays of the period were good enough for them they were also good enough for their children. Because of this, his association with the theatre began when he was a little over seven years old and even before his first night at the theatre Henry James had been exposed to such allied arts as the pantomime, the concert hall, and the circus. The impression which the drama made upon him at this time was great; not only did he and his brother, William, stage theatricals in their home, but Henry in his early adolescence was given to writing scenarios for that purpose. His father describes him as being "an immense writer of novels and drama" and adds, "He has considerable talent as a writer, but I am at a loss to know whether he will ever accomplish much."²

In an era still under the influence of puritanism, James's early theatre-going took place in theatres which camouflaged themselves with such innocent titles as "gardens," "lecture rooms," and "lyceums," the dramatic fare of which centered around altered versions of Shakespeare and Dion Boucicault's own plays as well as his adaptations of Dickens' novels. James was also exposed to such inane farces of the period as The Toodles and The Serious Family.³ His account of his New York childhood in A Small Boy and Others, written when he was seventy years old, is evidence that he never forgot the melo-

²Edel, pp. 21, 16.

³Edel, pp. 23-24.

dramas he saw at that time.⁴

On his second trip to Europe, James was first exposed to the French drama, which he had learned of earlier in glowing terms from a tutor, M. Toepffer, who talked to the James brothers of Corneille and Racine.⁵ At the age of twenty-six he spent most of his evenings at the Comédie Française where he learned to appreciate the drama of the French neoclassicists as well as the drama of his own period. He learned to love the Théâtre Français and at the same time to dislike the insipid drama of London and America. The attitudes which he formed at this time are very important to the study of Daisy Miller, for his experiences as an American abroad gave rise to the international theme in his fiction, which he utilizes in Daisy Miller; and the attachment he gained at this time for the French drama greatly influenced his style of dramatic writing.

Attempting to write for the English stage, James was struggling to bring to it the same glory that he felt the Theatre Français possessed. He was extremely ashamed of the lack of an English drama and forecast that "Until our dramatists respect their craft a good deal more than, as a rule, they do to-day . . . there will be no hope for the English Theatre. It is, indeed, in very plain danger of becoming a colossal vul-

⁴For a compiled listing of the plays Henry James saw as a boy see Robert C. Le Clair, Young Henry James: 1843-1879, (New York, 1955).

⁵Henry James, Notes of a Son and Brother, (New York, 1914), p. 9.

garity."⁶ In "The Blight of the Drama," an article in Harpers Weekly, he discussed the condition of the London stage and complained, "There are dozens and dozens of stages and thousands and thousands of shows; but the white cliffs of Dover continue to constitute to the east, the rigid limit of their appeal to the civilized consciousness."⁷

James was a Victorian, writing in an age when the emphasis in the English theatre was upon stage machinery and the scenic effect. In this period scenic devices replaced good scripts and audiences attended the theatre to see not drama, but scenic spectacles. The script, however, was not the only aspect which lacked quality; the actors and theatres both, with all their gilt trappings, were equally inartistic. During the nineteenth century, the playwrights moved from classicism to romanticism to realism. Just previous to James's theatrical period, European dramatists had experienced a minor revival of the neoclassic with its observance of the unities and the five act structure, but generally the century saw the rise and flourishing of the domestic play, the piece bien fait. English writers of this drama, such as Boucicault, Bulwer-Lytton, and Tom Taylor, followed the precepts of Scribe and Sardou. Their sole intent was to hold the audience's attention for two hours

⁶Walbrook, H. M. "Henry James and the English Theatre," Nineteenth Century, (July, 1916), p. 142.

⁷Allan Wade, ed. The Scenic Art, (New York, 1948), p. 295.

and then to let them go in good humor. To do this they wrote plays which required elaborate scenic effects--ships blew up and sank, buildings burned, and real water put out the fire--and whose sole purpose was to catch the mind of the audience and to hold it by alternately satisfying and thwarting the needs of discursive reason.⁸

Because the model for drama was to James, the Theatre Français, he turned to it for his inspiration. In writing of the French drama he was effusive:

The stage throws into relief the best gifts of the French mind. . . . Such art, such finish, such grace, such taste, such a marvellous exhibition of applied science, are the mark of a chosen people and these delightful talents imply the existence of every virtue.⁹

He admonished the English stage:

A good French play is an admirable work of art, of which it behoves patrons of the contemporary English drama, at any rate to speak with respect. It serves its purpose to perfection and French dramatists as far as I can see, have no more secrets to learn.¹⁰

His admiration of the French dramatists was so great that when he began to write drama, James passionately wrote, "À moi, Scribe, à moi, Sardou, à moi Dennery!"¹¹ indicating that it was these writers, the developers of the pièce bien fait (popularly

⁸Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre, (New York, 1955), p. 18.

⁹Wade, p. 295.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, eds. The Notebooks of Henry James, (New York, 1947), p. 100.

known as the well-made play), whom he was intent upon following. At the time when James wrote Daisy Miller: A Comedy, drama of this kind had ruled the stage not only at the Comedie Francaise but in London as well for nearly twenty years, and James's admiration for the well-made play dictates the necessity to consider the theatrical period in which he lived.

The form of the well-made play, or the pièce bien fait, was created by the French dramatist, Scribe, and was so constructed that any sort of sentimentality could be stuffed into it and made plausible. Scribe's formula conventionalized life agreeably and gratified the bourgeois taste. He gave to the newly risen middle class of the Continent and of England a theatre of easy amusement for which they were searching and with which their particular philosophy of material comfort and respectability was in accord. To do this, as Adolphe Dennery, a disciple of Scribe, explained, the author was to, "Take an interesting theme, a subject neither too new or too old, neither too commonplace nor too original--so as to avoid shocking either the vulgar minded or the delicate souled."¹² Francisque Sarcey, a French drama critic of the period, suggested: "In such a piece we do not look for a profound analysis of the passions, or a portrayal of character, or for

¹²Brander Mathews, ed. Papers on Playmaking, (New York, 1957), pp. 83-84.

anything that constitutes great art."¹³ Even though this particular formula did not produce "great art", dramatists of the period in England as well as on the Continent, wrote in, indeed, could not escape the influence of, the formula play of Scribe. As William Archer points out, "The very fact that ingenuity and adroitness rather than insight and thought were the qualities of the school of Scribe, rendered the luxuriant French drama of the period readily capable of exportation."¹⁴

The formula which dramatists of the Scribean tradition followed is a blueprint by which a play may be constructed. The well-made play opens with witty or brilliant dialogue giving exposition about events preceding the opening of the play. Near the end of the first act, the hero, a likeable, naive fellow who is at the moment down in his luck meets his more worldly opposition; the villain. At this point they begin their battle of wits which will be the action of the play. Usually the conflict is the result of the villain's desire for monetary gain or perhaps his interest in the hero's lover. Suspense is created by the playwright's hints as to what is going to happen, causing the audience to anticipate the action. The characters in the play are kept ignorant of crucial information while the audience, pleased with its intelligence, feels

¹³Frank Wadleigh Chandler, The Contemporary Drama of France, (Boston, 1923), p. 3.

¹⁴William Archer, The Old Drama and the New, (Boston, 1923), p. 253.

omniscient. As the play progresses, the hero appears to be winning the battle but soon the villain, because of his knowledge about something of which the hero is unaware, turns the tables and appears to be winning. Both the hero and the villain undergo, during the course of the play, rapid reversals of fortune until at last the hero discovers a secret (reminiscent of the Deus ex Machina) which utterly defeats the villain. The wavering fortunes of the hero are stabilized and good triumphs over evil. The play ends happily in one grand scene in which all the characters are on stage, forming a living tableau.¹⁵

Any technique which would hold the audience's attention was used by writers of the well-made play and thus they loaded their plays with references to such emotional concepts as

¹⁵Stephen S. Stanton, in the introduction to Camille and Other Plays (New York, 1957), pp. xii-xv, points out that the well-made play follows seven structural features: "[1] a plot based on a secret known to the audience but withheld from certain characters (who have long been engaged in a battle of wits) until its revelation (or the direct consequence thereof) in the climactic scene serves to unmask a fraudulent character and restore to good fortune the suffering hero, with whom the audience has been made to sympathize; [2] a pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, prepared by exposition (this pattern assisted by contrived entrances and exits, letters, and other devices); [3] a series of ups and downs in the hero's fortunes, caused by his conflict with an adversary; [4] the counterpunch of peripetia and scène à faire, marking, respectively, the lowest and the highest point in the hero's adventures, and brought about by the disclosure of secrets to the opposing side; [5] a central misunderstanding or quiproquo made obvious to the spectator but withheld from the participants; [6] a logical and credible denouement; and [7] the reproduction of the overall action pattern in the individual acts."

honor, purity, motherhood, duty and similar abstractions. They might, in order to make a character appear unfavorable, link him frequently with a deck of cards or an empty champagne bottle or anything of which the Victorian audience might be expected to disapprove. A theatre-goer of the period could count on several standard but highly emotional scenes in the play he was attending; the parting, the renunciation, the death-bed scene, and the unmasking, all of which were an integral part of the structure of the well-made play as was the heavy reliance upon asides and tirades for exposition.¹⁶

James studied this structure until he was sure that he knew every device that made a stage play different from fiction, and late in 1831, just before he began work on the adaptation of Daisy Miller, he wrote: "The French stage I have mastered; I say that without hesitation. I have it in my pocket, and it seems to me clear that this is the light by which one must work today."¹⁷ Thus, from James's contact with the theatre of his time and from the type of plays written in this period, come James's theories on playwriting which he practiced in writing Daisy Miller: A Comedy. In 1878 he wrote, "My inspection of the French theatre will fructify. I have thoroughly mastered Dumas, Augier and Sardou and I know all they know and a great

¹⁶Robert Hogan and Sven Eric Molin, eds. Drama, The Major Genres, (New York, 1962), p. 579-580.

¹⁷Matthiessen and Murdock, pp. 37-38.

deal more besides.¹⁸

Although James began his career as a prolific author of criticism, short stories and novels, he thought seriously even early in his career of writing for the stage. In an article in The Nation as early as 1872 he wrote: "To be read two hundred years after your death is something; but to be acted is better. . ." ¹⁹ Again in 1878, writing to his brother of his desire, he said, "I am very impatient to get at work writing for the stage--a project I have long had. I am . . . certain I should succeed."²⁰ Experimenting with the dramatic form, he had written two plays when finally in 1882 he adapted Daisy Miller: A Study for the stage. It is unknown why he decided to adapt his novel, although there seems to be a possibility that the suggestion was made by the managers of Madison Square Theatres. He submitted the play to Madison Square, where it was rejected, and James, disgusted with the affair wrote:

I tried to write a little play (Daisy Miller) and I wrote it: but my poor little play has not been an encouragement. I needn't enter into the tiresome history of my ridiculous negotiations with the people of Madison Square Theatre, of which the proprietors behaved like asses and sharpers combined; this episode, by itself, would make a brilliant chapter in a realistic novel. It interested me immensely to write the piece and the work confirmed all my convictions as to the fascination of this sort of composition. But what it has brought (<me>) to know, both in New York and in London about the manners and ideas of managers and actors and about conditions of production

¹⁸Percy Lubbock, ed. The Letters of Henry James, I (New York, 1920), p. 60.

¹⁹Wade, p. 4.

²⁰Edel, p. 41.

on our unhappy English stage, is almost fatally disgusting and discouraging. I have learned very vividly, that if one attempts to work for it one must be prepared for disgust, deep and unspeakable disgust.²¹

His experiences with the producer caused him to postpone writing drama until 1890 when his attempt to write for the stage became his sole concern. For five years, from 1890 until 1895, James attempted to write drama for the English stage, and at the end of those five years he turned back to fiction, discouraged by his inadequacy as a dramatist. He tried once more in his later years to write for the stage but never with the concentration which he had applied from the time he was forty-seven until he was fifty-two. By studying the biography of James and its relationship to the drama during this interval, by examining his writing in letters and notebooks about his dramatic work during the years in which he concentrated upon writing drama, light is reflected upon his attitudes in the year when he adapted Daisy Miller. Between 1882 and 1890 James solidified his concepts of dramatic writing as well as his attitudes toward the form as a whole.

James seems to have been simultaneously attracted and repelled by the drama. He was interested in the money which he saw contemporary playwrights making, as he indicates in his letters to Robert Louis Stevenson and his brother, William, ²²

²¹Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 44.

²²Lubbock, pp. 176, 180, ff.

as well as in the fame which could be gained writing drama. At the same time he was frightened by the publicity which attended the theatre, from which, as Edel has pointed out, he attempted to hide:

A work of fiction might receive adverse reviews and fall flat in the market and still remain an honorable performance; it did not involve the public exposure that went with the play. When a magazine rejected a story--this was a private matter between editor and writer. But when a play was announced, publicized, promised to the public and then not produced, or failed in production the author was, in the process, publicly rejected. This is what Henry James feared more than anything else.²³

It would seem that if James feared exposing himself to the unpleasantness of public rejection, this could be one of the reasons he chose to follow the already tried and usually successful formula of the well-made play. An attitude such as this might also explain why James was so secretive about his play-writing that he scrupulously destroyed the working notebooks for his dramas.²⁴ This fear notwithstanding, his interest in the theatre, his awareness of his decline in popularity, and the still strong urge for renown impelled him to continue as a playwright. In 1881 he wrote:

After long years of waiting, of obstruction, I find myself able to put into execution the most cherished of all my projects--that of beginning to work for the stage. It was one of my earliest--I had it from the first. . . . It is strange nevertheless that I should never have done anything--and to a certain extent it is ominous.²⁵

²³Edel, p. 43.

²⁴Ibid., p. 14.

²⁵Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 37.

Even after the rejection of Daisy Miller: A Comedy, James, in 1882, wrote: "The dramatic form seems to me the most beautiful thing possible; the misery of the thing is the baseness of the English speaking stage affords no setting for it,"²⁶ evidencing his disappointment in the theatre as well as his obstinate infatuation with the drama. His reasons for wanting to write drama were revealed when, in 1889, he wrote:

I had practically given up my old, valued, long cherished dream of doing something for the stage, for fame's sake, for art's and fortune's: overcome by the vulgarity, the brutality, the baseness of the conditions of the English speaking theatre today. But after an interval, a long one, the vision has revived, on a new and very much humbler basis, and especially under the lash of necessity. Of art, of fame, il est maintenant for peu question: I simply must try and try seriously to produce half a dozen--a dozen, five dozen--plays for the sake of my pocket, my material future. Of how little money the novel makes for me I needn't discourse here. . . . To accept the circumstances, in their extreme humility, and do the best I can in them: this is the moral of my present situation.²⁷

Thus, in 1882, when James had adapted Daisy Miller, he had done so for "fame's sake, for art's and fortune's." However, James's insecurity in the dramatic form caused him to give a multitude of contradictory reasons for launching himself into a career in the theatre as he had always wanted to do. In 1891 he wrote to Robert Louis Stevenson:

Je fais aussi du theatre, moi; and am doing it to begin with for reasons too numerous to burden you with, but all excellent and practical. . . . Don't be hard on me--

²⁶Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 37.

²⁷Ibid., p. 99.

simplifying and chastening necessity has laid it's brutal hand on me and I have had to try to make somehow or other the money I don't make by literature. . . . My books don't sell and it looks as if my plays might.²⁸

Monetary gain, then, was one reason for his attempt to write for the physical stage. It was not, however, as he would have had Stevenson believe, his only motivation. James had been dreaming of writing for the stage since the start of his literary career. Five years after the start of his career, in 1869, he published a short scene, Pyramus and Thisbe. He attempted in two other early pieces to write dramatic dialogue in the 1870's and in his notebooks, in 1881, confesses privately that he dreamed of writing for the stage: "I wonder at times that the dream should not have faded away. It comes back to me now, however, and I ache with longing to settle down to a sustained attempt in this direction."²⁹ Once into the form, working seriously at it, he admits to his brother another reason for wanting to write drama lay in his recognition of the difficulty in mastering the genre:

The strange thing is that I always, universally knew this was my more characteristic form--but was kept away from it by a half-modest, half-exaggerated sense of the difficulty (that is, I mean the practical odiousness) of the conditions. . . . As for the form itself, its honour and inspiration are (à défaut d'autres) in its difficulty. If it were easy to write a good play I couldn't and wouldn't think of it; but it is in fact damnably hard (to this truth the paucity of the article--in the English

²⁸Lubbock, p. 176.

²⁹Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 37.

speaking world testifies,) and that constitutes a solid respectability--guarantees one's intellectual self respect.³⁰

Accepting the challenge he found in dramatic writing, he exclaims: "I find the form opens out before me as if there were a kingdom to conquer . . . I feel as if I had at last found my form--my real one--that for which pale fiction is an ineffectual substitute."³¹

Although James's plays contain the major highly dramatic themes inherent in his novels they lack sensitivity and become oversimplified or lost in the plot structure. This may be attributed to James's failure accurately to assess the demands of his audience. He attempted, in other words, to please the public, to give them what he thought they wanted. In giving his plays happy endings he believed that he would "basely gratify their [the audience's] artless instincts and British thick-wittedness."³² In spite of the fact that James, as he did with Daisy Miller, would parody and vulgarize his own novels and tales to suit what he felt the audience wanted, he would become extremely indignant in discussing instances in which playwrights had consented to alterations which changed the intention of the author.³³ Although James held the taste of his audience in

³⁰Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 180.

³¹Ibid., p. 182.

³²Edel, p. 241.

³³Walbrook, p. 142.

contempt, he was among those prepared to "make the bases concessions" to it. To please the "sweltering mass" he mutilated his own novels, stories, and ideas. He felt that to please them his drama "has to be stirred to the tune of perpetual motion and served under pain of being rejected with disgust, with the time honoured breadsauce of the happy ending."³⁴ However, when James failed to please the public, even though he catered to what he thought were their tastes, he became very embittered, and in 1893, after his high hopes and admiration for the drama had at last been disappointed, he felt that too great a gulf lay between the drama as he envisioned it and the practical demands of the theatre:

The whole odiousness of the thing lies in the connection between the drama and the theatre. The one is admirable in its interest and difficulty, the other loathsome in its conditions. If the drama could only be theoretically or hypothetically acted, the fascination resident in its all but unconquerable . . . form would be unimpaired, and one would be able to have the exquisite exercise without the horrid sacrifice.³⁵

In The Tragic Muse James, in a speech, given to Gabriel Nash, condemns the theatre for being so mundane:

. . . the omnium gatherum of a big commercial city at the hour of the day when their taste is at its lowest, flocking out of hideous hotels and restaurants, gorged with food, stultified with buying and selling and with all the other sordid preoccupations of the age, squeezed together in a sweltering mass, disappointed in their seats, timing the author, timing the actor, wishing to get their money

³⁴Edel, p. 349.

³⁵Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 211.

back on the spot--all before eleven o'clock. . . . What can you do with a character, with an idea, with a feeling, between dinner and the suburban trains?³⁶

Certainly James was overly cautious in his attempts to write plays. However, while his contemporaries, Ibsen, Wilde, and Shaw, were making use of this same formula by taking liberties with the established "rules," James clings faithfully and without imagination to the basic form. He makes frequent use of asides and catch phrases and resorts to melodrama to untangle his plots. James was so interested in learning the mechanics of the play form that he neglected character and atmosphere, and the characters he drew are stock characters moving in stock situations.

Unfortunately the rules of this form pinned him down, forcing his play to become the captive of his theories. Once James even admitted that he never sat down to write a play "without feeling that a thousand devils were besetting him from all sides."³⁷ Some of these besetting devils may have been his insistence upon following the rigid laws of the well-made play form. Though he honored those "laws" he felt chaffed beneath them as he was too accustomed to the demands of writing in another form. He realized that his struggle rested in part on his earlier career as a novelist:

³⁶Henry James, The Tragic Muse, (London, 1948), p. 56.

³⁷Edel, p. 36.

Let me not indeed speak of the difficulty of meeting the requirements of the stage as if for a writer, of whatever antecedents, having any business at all dans cette galere . . . I know not whether for the effective playwright the fascination be less than for the perverted man of letters freshly trying his hand at an art of which in opposition to his familiar art, every rule is an infraction on, every luxury a privation and every privilege a forfeiture, that he has if possible even more to unlearn than to learn. . . . To treat a "big" subject in the intensely summarized summarised fashion demanded by an evening's traffic of the stage when the evening, freely clipped at each end, is reduced to two hours and a half, is a feat of which the difficulty looms too large to a writer accustomed to tell a story in another form.³⁸

As a novelist writing for the drama, James labored to explain every detail--unable to trust the plasticity of the theatre to convey his thought--while using the formula for the well-made play. To him, untrained in writing for the theatre, although a seasoned playgoer, the drama was a special art, so complicated and difficult to write that one needed a formula in order to be successful. He followed that formula without question, making the traditional fuss over entrances and exits, forcing his stories to fit the standard plot, and using the French ficelle character far more awkwardly than he ever did in his fiction. He admitted that he was uncomfortable, was encumbered working under them, but he refused to break the rules of the well-made play, or to create his own even though, in fiction, he was an innovator. Following the formula was what James meant by adhering to a "few grave, rigid laws." Years later James was to admit, "Instead of making the dramatic interest my sole or even chief consideration, I aimed at a supreme technical

³⁸Edel, p. 346.

victory in observing a unity for a unity's sake."³⁹

His admission that he was too intent upon form is demonstrated by his adaptation of Daisy Miller: A Study. Why James chose to adapt the story rather than use a new story is impossible to determine. No doubt, as Brander Mathews points out:

When he commenced playwriting Henry James did not appreciate that it is a more difficult task to dramatize a novel than to compose an original play, because the author is necessarily unable to deal with his material as freely as he could if it were still molten and had not already been run into the mold of a narrative.⁴⁰

Perhaps he was trying to capitalize on the popularity of the novel, thinking his successful novel would also make a successful play, since in 1872 he wrote: "An acted play is a novel intensified; it realizes what the novel suggests, and by paying a liberal tribute to the senses, anticipates your possible complaint that your entertainment is of the meagre sort styled 'intellectual.'"⁴¹ Unfortunately the play which James evolved from his novel resembles only vaguely the original story. The names of the characters are the same and the situation is similar--the society involved and the international setting are the same but little else of the original story remains.

The original novel is a sensitive study of cultural differences between America and Europe. With this story, James is

³⁹Simon Harcourt Nowell-Smith, The Legend of the Master, (London, 1947), p. 68.

⁴⁰Brander Mathews, "Henry James and the Theatre," Bookman, XI, (June, 1920), pp. 392-393.

⁴¹Wade, p. 3.

attempting to illustrate the lack of communication between the naivete of America and the sophistication of Europe. In the novel no one is the villain, no one is to be condemned. In its own way, each society is right and the drama of the story lies in the lack of communications between these societies:

Roman matrons and American matrons long resident in Rome were shocked that a girl should walk out alone with a gentleman. Daisy's circle at Schenectady would have been horrified at the idea, natural enough to the European mind, that Winterbourne was staying on at Geneva because of an affair with a married woman older than himself. The casual mention of this bit of gossip, which has no connection with the plot, serves to set two standards over against each other, and may be suggestive to the reader who is thoughtlessly adopting the European point of view.⁴²

James asks that the reader excuse or condemn as he will, since he presents impartially the two conflicting sides.

The theme of the novel, misunderstanding between two cultures, is only hinted at in the play. There is no longer a clash between two societies; no longer is the theme centered around an international question. Although Daisy is frowned upon for and made vulnerable by her indiscretions, the plot is principally one of the intrigue between two characters who are practically nonexistent in the novel, Eugenio, the Miller's courier, and Winterbourne's lady love. Oddly enough, the plot for the play is suggested in the novel by an unsympathetic character, Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne's aunt. Mrs. Costello suggests sardonically: "She has never seen anything like him

⁴²William Cairns, Character Portrayal in the Works of Henry James, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 2, (Madison, 1918), p. 35.

[Giovannelli]; he is better even than the courier. It was the courier, probably, who introduced him; and if he succeeds in marrying the young lady, the courier will come in for a magnificent commission."⁴³ Winterbourne declares to his aunt that Giovannelli has no hopes of marrying Daisy and thus an idea which is firmly rejected in the novel becomes the basis for the play.

JAMES'S APPLICATION OF THE WELL-MADE PLAY FORMULA

In adapting the novel to the stage, James changed the focus so that the plot would fit the well-made play form. Believing as he did that the structural features founded by Scribe and Sardou were rules by which to write a play he found it necessary to add intrigue to his original story. He did so by devising a plot which revolves about the conspiracy between Eugenio and Giovannelli as well as Madame de Katkoff. In any well-made play, "first came the exposition, next the First Clash, next the Complication, next the Reversal, and finally the Unravelling."⁴⁴ James used the first act for exposition, in which the action of the play begins near the end. At this point Winterbourne tells Eugenio, "You had better not interfere with that young lady," and is answered by Eugenio's, "I suppose you mean that I had better not interfere with you! You had better not defy me to

⁴³Citations from Daisy Miller: A Study are to The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel, (New York, 1962), IV.

⁴⁴Hogan and Molin, p. 579.

do so!⁴⁵ This scene constitutes the first clash between the hero and the villain of the piece. The complication is brought about when Madame de Katkoff accepts Eugenio's proposition and thus foils the budding romance between Winterbourne and Daisy. The reversal occurs when, in the sixth scene of the third act, Madame de Katkoff confesses her part in the plot to Winterbourne. In the final scene of the third act James manipulates the obligatory scene; Winterbourne and Daisy Miller know nothing of the plot to marry Daisy to Giovanelli until it is revealed to them and the evil characters are exposed. At this time poetic justice is meted out to Winterbourne, who has been wretchedly unhappy while caught in the clutches of Madame de Katkoff, and to the conspirators whose plot is foiled.

Winterbourne, the fortune of whom takes sudden turns for the better or for the worse depending on the whims of his adversary, Eugenio, finds himself buffeted up and down between Daisy and Madame de Katkoff. Such dips and rises in fortune are, again, a part of the pattern of the well-made play. In this case Winterbourne, first, has the good fortune to meet Daisy, while pursuing the countess. Eugenio frightens both ladies away and the hero's position is plummeted downward. Winterbourne follows the countess to Rome where she soundly admonishes him to fall in love with Daisy. Attempting to follow her instructions,

⁴⁵Citations from Daisy Miller: A Comedy are to The Complete Plays of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel.

he is thwarted when Madame de Katkoff, urged by Eugenio, relents and permits him to woo her. Suspense is deepened regarding the outcome of relations between Winterbourne and Daisy for although Winterbourne feels that his fortune is on the rise the central misunderstanding between himself and Daisy is deepened. Finally, in the scène à faire, Winterbourne, who has just been rejected by Madame de Katkoff, learns of the evil conspiracy and realizes his love for Daisy. At this point his fortunes begin to rise as Eugenio's begin to fall. However, Giovanelli, representing the evil of Eugenio, takes Daisy into the carnival crowd, causing her to have a relapse. For Winterbourne, the near death of his new found love marks the lowest point in his fortunes. Daisy, however, revives and admits her love for him and Winterbourne's fortune reaches its highest point. In this final scene the quiproquo or the central misunderstanding between Daisy and Winterbourne, which the audience has been aware of all through the play, is revealed to the lovers. Winterbourne and Daisy love each other, but misinterpreting each other's actions, each feels the other dislikes him.

These same structural features are repeated in each of the three acts. In the first act, the characters of the main plot are revealed and the subplot of Mrs. Costello and her friends is established. The conspiracy on which this act turns is that of Mrs. Costello who is determined that Winterbourne shall marry Miss Durant. Mr. Reverdy, the hero of the subplot, experiences similar ups and downs which rest upon the fortunes of

his rival, Winterbourne. When Winterbourne is in good graces with Mrs. Costello and Miss Durant, Reverdy's fortune is down, but when Winterbourne is with Daisy or the Countess, Reverdy experiences good fortune. Winterbourne, too, has fortune which rises and falls as it does in the whole play. He meets Madame de Katkoff only to be spurned; meets Daisy Miller only to be forced to lose her to the courier and finally, the lowest point of all, after learning of Madame de Katkoff's departure, he is expected to be the escort for his stuffy aunt. Daisy inaugurates the reversal by exposing, with a conveniently timed entrance, Mrs. Costello's character as well as her plan. The conspiracy of the aunt is shattered and the misunderstanding of character between Winterbourne and Mrs. Costello is corrected. Winterbourne's fortune reaches its highest point in the first act as he conducts Daisy to the Chateau de Chillon.

In the second act the secret which the audience is aware of and of which the main characters are not is that Winterbourne and Daisy are attracted to one another. Revealed to the audience in the first scene between the countess and Winterbourne as well as by later scenes involving Eugenio's plot to distract Winterbourne from Daisy, the infatuation is made more apparent by Winterbourne's attempt to separate Daisy and Giovanelli. That Winterbourne and Daisy love each other but misinterpret each other's actions to mean disapproval forms not only the central misunderstanding for this act but the quiproquo for the whole play. Winterbourne's lowest fortune occurs when he must

refuse his engagement to eat with Daisy and his highest point at the end of the scene when he plans to "have that moonlight drive!" The sudden reversal of attitudes in the play by Daisy, Madame de Katkoff and Winterbourne forces Daisy Miller's fortune to decline and Winterbourne's to rise.

As the third act opens, Winterbourne is no longer so fortunate; Madame de Katkoff is shunning him and he is worried about Daisy. Again, the imperfectly understood attraction between the hero and the heroine particularly as it is revealed by Daisy creates the central misunderstanding of the act. The movement of action of this act is the same as the whole play, culminating in the revelation of Eugenio's plot by Madame de Katkoff and the happy ending for Daisy and Winterbourne. Because this act is the unravelling or the denouement all the strands of the play are carefully finished; the ficelle characters, Mr. Reverdy and Miss Durant, are happily engaged, Daisy is accepted socially, and Madame de Katkoff is freed from blackmail. Thus, although the theme of the story is sacrificed, the construction of the plot of the play follows with precision the formula of the well-made play.

Plot and theme are not the only things to suffer by James's adaptation of his novel. The characters with whom he deals so sensitively in the tale bear only a surface resemblance to the stereotypes who wander in and out of the play. The Daisy Miller of the novel is a naive, innocent, young girl who is "much disposed towards conversation"; "it might have been

said, . . . that she chattered." Conscious of being a flirt, but unconscious of its meaning to the European mind, she readily admits, "I'm a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not?" She is an ingenuous creature, openly frank, thoroughly innocent and unable to understand the connotations which others draw from her actions. When Winterbourne tells her that for young unmarried women it is improper to flirt, she rejoins simply and honestly, "It seems much more proper in young unmarried women than in old married ones." She does not mind the stares of the populace if she is conscious of them at all. When Mrs. Walker tells her, "You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about," Daisy is surprised and questions, "Talked about? What do you mean?" Even when she is made aware of the situation she is unconcerned: "If this is improper, Mrs. Walker, . . . then I am all improper, and you must give me up." Part of her defiance here is that she refuses to be manipulated by others and part is that, as she tells Winterbourne later, "It would have been most unkind; he Giovanelli had been talking about that walk for ten days." When told that she is breaking European convention she admits that she dislikes it and tells Winterbourne, "The young ladies of this country have a dreadfully pokey time of it, . . . I don't see why I should change my habits for them."

Henry James, in a letter to Lady Lytton, has described what he intended in the character of Daisy Miller as she appears in the novel:

Poor little Daisy Miller was, as I understand her, above all things, innocent. It was not to make a scandal, or because she took pleasure in a scandal, that she "went on" with Giovanelli. She never took the measure really of the scandal she produced, and had no means of doing so: she was too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things. She intended infinitely less with G. than she appeared to intend--and he himself was quite at sea as to how far she was going. She was a flirt, a perfectly superficial and unmalicious one, and she was very fond, as she announced at the outset, of "gentlemen's society." In Giovanelli she got a gentleman--who, to her uncultivated perception, was a very brilliant one--all to herself, and she enjoyed his society in the largest possible measure. When she found that this measure was thought too large by other people--especially Winterbourne--she was wounded; she became conscious that she was accused of something of which her very comprehension was vague. This consciousness she endeavoured to throw off; she tried not to think of what people meant and easily succeeded in doing so; but to my perception she never really tried to take her revenge upon public opinion--to outrage it and irritate it. In this sense I fear I must declare she was not defiant, in the sense you mean. If I recollect rightly, the word "defiant" is used in the tale--but it is not intended in that large sense; it is descriptive of the state of her poor little heart, which felt that a fuss was being made about her and didn't wish to hear anything more about it. She only wished to be left alone--being herself quite unaggressive. The keynote of her character is innocence. . . .⁴⁶

Innocence may be the keynote of her character but she has other characteristics as well. The Daisy Miller of the novel is also selfish and spoiled as well as naive and innocent. "You were awfully mean at Vevay," she tells Winterbourne. "You wouldn't do anything. You wouldn't stay there when I asked you." These faults, added to her blind stubbornness and her self esteem combined with her many good qualities make her as

⁴⁶B. R. McElderry, Jr., "The 'Shy Incongruous Charm' of 'Daisy Miller'," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, X, (Sept., 1955), pp. 164-165.

disagreeable as she is charming. She maintains her character in the face of all opposition and one is given the impression that the Daisy Miller of the novel dies unchanged. Her final message to Winterbourne that she is not engaged to Giovanelli indicates that although she was concerned, the concern was over Winterbourne's opinion of her and not acquiescence to the society which had condemned her.

In the play, although James does not completely negate his conception of the heroine, she is considerably altered. The Daisy Miller of the play has no bad traits which might antagonize an audience. Her only fault is that she is ignorant of protocol, a trait not uncommon in a typical well-made heroine. Drawn in broad outline, the Daisy Miller in James's play becomes the flawless, innocent heroine of the melodrama. Unlike the heroine of the novel, this Daisy is very conscious of the disapproval of others. "It's a pity," she says, "you can't walk in Rome without everyone staring so!" And to Giovanelli she confesses, "They would have thought it more improper if they had seen me leaving alone, so I didn't say a word to anyone." That she is unconscious of any wrong is indicated when, in a soliloquy, she says, "There seem to be so many ways, over here! But I only know one way, . . ." The implication is that she is to be excused on grounds of innocence. Then she learns of her error in the final act:

It's hard to be sick when there's so much pleasure going on, especially when you're so fond of pleasure as poor silly me! Perhaps I'm too fond, that's one of the things I thought of as I lay there. I was afraid I had been bad

and I wanted to live to be good again. I was afraid I should die, and I didn't want to die.

Her desire to get well so that she might be good is proof that she is basically good. James gives Daisy such speeches as "I hope I shall never have any quarrel with anyone. I'm very good natured," which blatantly establish her character as the naive, pure heroine of the period. She has, like the other heroines of this form, the self-sufficiency, however uninformed, that knows good instinctively. For instance, she immediately distrusts Madame de Katkoff and, on the other hand, though she is unable to explain why, she knows that Winterbourne is a very warm person. Her perception is contrasted with Miss Durant's, who, upon meeting Winterbourne declares, "He's very cold--he's very cold!"

Plays of this period have a love angle and sometimes two, and in order to fit the form James makes Daisy far more interested in Winterbourne, romantically, than she is made to be in the novel. In the novel she tells him, ". . . you are the last man I should think of flirting with. As I have had the pleasure of informing you, you are too stiff." In the play, she wistfully wishes that she had not done something to displease him and when Winterbourne, by being kind to her, dissuades her from going to a cafe with Giovanelli she murmurs, "He can do with me what he will."

Winterbourne's character in the play suffers the same sort of conversion. When James wrote the novel he chose a name for Winterbourne, as he did for Daisy Miller, which described his

character. Winterbourne is just what his name implies, a very cold man, born of Winter. Since the novel is written from his point of view it is possible to see how detached from any extreme emotion he really is. His attitude is one of a semi-interested viewer who refuses to become emotionally involved. He has become so a part of the social conventions in which he lives that he is automatic in his observance of them. In keeping with propriety, a young man should visit his aunt even if he doesn't like her, so Winterbourne goes to see her. To be proper Daisy should get into the carriage and even though Winterbourne knows it will only antagonize her he tells her to get into the carriage. Daisy does not act the way he has come to think proper for a girl of her age and situation and therefore he is unable to understand his feeling that she is perfectly innocent. Only vaguely does he recognize what he has become, and admits, "I have lived too long in foreign parts." In the garden at Vevay when he meets Daisy Miller for the first time, Winterbourne very calmly inspects her. James describes him as having "a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted to observing and analysing it." [writer's italics] James's choice of words describes the lack of emotion with which Winterbourne looked upon Daisy as well as his own life. Through this coldness, however, James plays upon a certain irony when Winterbourne, visiting the Colosseum at night, is moved to quote lines from the highly passionate Byron. The moment is abruptly ended when Winterbourne suddenly and coldly remembers that

science warns against the bad air of the Italian night. Here is an attempt to draw a parallel and illustrate by contrast Winterbourne's character with the character of Manfred. Just previously, Daisy mentions to Winterbourne, "I should think you would be lonesome" . . . "You are always going round by yourself." Manfred, too, is alone and alone in infested air. Never would it have occurred to the romantic hero to concern himself with the dangers of night air as it does with the collected Winterbourne. The contrast is heightened when one examines the over all character of Winterbourne. He is excessively conscious of other people's approbation, as when he takes Daisy to the Castle of Chillon. "He waited for her in the large hall of the hotel, where the couriers, the servants, the foreign tourists, were lounging about and staring." Again, since the point of view is Winterbourne's, the reader is made to observe what Winterbourne observes: "He passed out with her among all the idle people that were assembled there; they were all looking at her very hard." When he is with her on the boat he is afraid she will not comport herself properly and thus embarrass him. When he walks with her in the Pincio in Rome he is overtly conscious of the stares of the populace. Near the end, "he flattered himself . . . that there was no smiling among the servants when he, at least, asked for Mrs. Miller at her hotel."

Another aspect of Winterbourne's dispassionate character is that he is rather blasé. He prefers those "dangerous, terrible women, with whom one's relations were liable to take a serious

turn" to the naive Daisy, since "she had no more surprises for him." He preferred them even though, "given certain contingencies, he should be afraid--literally afraid--of these ladies." Nevertheless, the reason for his unfavorable attitude toward Daisy is primarily that she perplexes him, upsets his cold but concrete world by her ingenuous warmth: . . . "He was angry at finding himself reduced to chopping logic about this young lady; he was vexed at his want of instinctive certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal."

The Winterbourne which James recreated for his play has very different characteristics. No longer is he cold and distant, but very warm and capable of the passion which forces him to follow the mysterious Madame de Katkoff. It is she who gives the description of Winterbourne's character in the play when she tells him:

Most people think you very cold, but I have discovered the truth. You are like one of those tall German stoves which presents to the eye a surface of smooth white porcelain, without the slightest symptom of fuel or of flame. Nothing at first could seem less glowing but after you have been in the room with it for half an hour you feel that the temperature is rising--and you want to open a window!

No longer is he, as in the novel, moved by unimpassioned reason, but by his emotions. Where in the novel he is for the most part an observer of action, in the play, because of his passionate character, he becomes a part of the action. He comes to Vevay not because he feels it proper to visit with his aunt but because he is following the countess. He falls in love with

Daisy and since he is in love with both her and the countess he follows them to Rome thereby frightening Eugenio into action.

James, in modifying the character of Winterbourne fitted him to the pattern of the hero in the piece bien fait. He is caught in the typical situation; "the hero is loved by two women: a naive girl whom he wishes to marry and an older woman to whom he is in some way obligated and who objects to his marriage."⁴⁷ Winterbourne, like the heroes of the form, is an intelligent young man who, though he is good hearted is too innocent and thus falls prey to the villain of the piece. Madame de Katkoff describes him as ingenuous. His rival, Giovanelli, calls him a "solemn fool" but never in the play--in contrast to the story--does anyone call him worldly. He is, on his part, as purely good and naive as is Daisy Miller. He is no longer the personification of Europe who, curling his mustache, tells his aunt, "My dear aunt, I am not so innocent.", and to whom the aunt replies, "You are too guilty then."

Since the novel contained no personification of evil, writing a well-made play created the necessity for James to invent a villain. He did so by enlarging the character of the courier who, in the story, is a less than secondary figure. To the provincial Millers, unaccustomed to the hierarchy of Europe, it seems quite natural to treat their courier on a fairly equal basis and it is because of this attitude that their conduct

⁴⁷Stanton, p. xiv.

toward him generates such an uproar among the Europeanized Americans. Beyond that, Eugenio's character is rarely mentioned in the novel. When he first appears, Winterbourne finds him offensive; "the young man, at least, thought his manner of looking an offense. . . ." Mrs. Miller relies on him to help her discipline her children and consequently he is somewhat domineering. "Winterbourne wished to Heaven this pretty girl were not so familiar with her courier" because Eugenio was inclined to tell Daisy what to do thereby spoiling Winterbourne's plans for an excursion to the old castle. The novel hints that Eugenio has influence on the social life of the Millers when Randolph says, "I tell you you've got to go. Eugenio'll raise something!" However, the principle purpose of his character is to establish more solidly the naivete of the Miller family.

The Eugenio of the drama, on the other hand, plays a major part. Necessary for the complication of the plot, his character is modeled after the typical villain in the melodrama of the period. It is he who plots to marry Daisy to Giovannelli and who complicates the love between the "inamorata", Winterbourne and Daisy. James establishes his character in the first act when he accosts Madame de Katkoff in the garden at Vevay. Madame de Katkoff describes him: "He is more than impertinent--he is dangerous." Eugenio lives up to her assertion by immediately threatening her with blackmail. He has in his possession the letter of hers, supposedly indiscreet, around which the plot revolves. James uses this letter to give Eugenio power over the

good characters in the play. Eugenio's possession of it follows the admonition of Sardou: "The letter! It plays a major part in most of your plots, and every detail of it is vital, container and contents."⁴⁸ By his allusions to it in the first scene of act one, Eugenio's potential villainy is established and the audience is made to anticipate his actions later in the play. When Madame de Katkoff says of the letter, "It can't be very bad," Eugenio asks, "Would you like to submit it to a few of your friends?" which not only establishes the contents of the letter but his intentions as to his use of it. Solely for the purpose of gaining material wealth for himself he flaunts the letter before the countess. Like most villains of the melodrama he is interested only in money and even when he is defeated at the end of the play his concern is primarily with money. He mutters in an aside, "He shall pay me for the flowers," when Giovannelli admits to him that he has lost Daisy to Winterbourne. In keeping with the convention Eugenio even has the physical aspects of a villain of the *pièce bien fait*: a dark, swarthy foreigner. When Madame de Katkoff says to him, "I forget your nationality," Eugenio answers, "I'm an Italian Swiss, a native of the beautiful city of Lugano." Even small actions which James has written in the stage directions are typical of the melodramatic villain: when plotting with his

⁴⁸Charles Blanc, Discourse en réponse au discours prononcé par M. Victorien Sardou, Pour sa réception à l'Académie Française, le 23 Mai, 1878, as quoted in Stanton, p. xxiii.

conspirators he does so while "stroking his mustache." He has the usual facade of good manners, and like most villains of the melodrama is extremely proud of them. "Madame does injustice to my manners," he tells the countess, "they are usually much appreciated." His good manners correspond with carefully learned good taste, implied when he frowns upon Giovanelli, "You have rather too many flowers there, by the way: you overdo it a little." Again, as of the well-made villain, he is cruel even to his conspirators, threatening them with phrases such as, "Take very good care, or you'll have a fall!", and muttering asides which air his contempt for them. He gloats over the countess, "She shall bend till she breaks!" in the same manner in which he gloats over Winterbourne when, in the seesaw of fortune, Eugenio is on top. He, very like a villain in a spoof of melodrama, gloats when he has managed to strike a blow against the hero, but when fortune is against him at the end, he mumbles disgruntledly and admits his defeat. Eugenio's asides, as when he gleefully tells Winterbourne that the countess has gone and then mumbles, "She had four horses: I frightened her more than a little!", are in keeping with the conventions which surround the melodramatic villain and by giving Eugenio asides James is able to reveal the villain's evil character to the audience while keeping it from the characters in the play.

Stephen S. Stanton describes a device common to the well-made play: "A loves B; B is opposed by C; A, pursuing reprisal against C, is victim of a misconception, for C is actually a

friend."⁴⁹ James uses a variation on this pattern when he introduces the character of Madame de Katkoff. Although she is mentioned only vaguely in the novel as "a very clever foreign lady" in whom Winterbourne is interested, her role in the play is very important. By modifying the device above, James uses her to add suspense and intrigue to the play: Daisy loves Winterbourne; Winterbourne loves the countess who, for personal reasons, opposes Winterbourne's budding love for Daisy, and, who, in turn, distrusts the countess. In the denouement Madame de Katkoff becomes a friend who encourages the love between Winterbourne and Daisy.

Madame de Katkoff is James's attempt to draw one of these "dangerous, terrible women" of whom Winterbourne, in the novel, is afraid. However, working with the binding necessity to fit the story to a preconstructed plot she becomes only a tool for furthering that plot. James uses her in any capacity in which she is needed and thus her character is unpredictable, lacking real motivation for her changes in attitude. In the first scene of act one, she is threatened with the letter by Eugenio. Since this scene is devoted mainly to exposition and direction of plot and since James is primarily concerned with establishing Eugenio as the villain, little attention is given to the development of Madame de Katkoff's character. Her concern over the letter in this act is not great enough to merit her reaction to

⁴⁹Stanton, p. xxii.

it in the second act. When Eugenio tells her that the letter bears her signature she answers him, "Can there be any better proof that I have nothing to be ashamed of?" and later she tells him, "If you are trying to frighten me, you don't--very much!" Even when he leaves her, her greatest reaction is that "He has shaken my nerves, and in this wretched garden, one is always observed." Yet, in the second act, since a greater reaction is needed to develop the plot, James forces her to be extremely desirous of obtaining the letter, as desirous, in fact, that her character almost reverses. Where in the first act she unselfishly refuses Winterbourne for his own good, in the second she becomes extremely selfish and decides to enter Eugenio's bargain because it is " . . . easier, perhaps, than paying out half one's fortune." However, since James felt the need of the "time honoured breadsauce of a happy ending" the character of Madame de Katkoff, again without sufficient motivation, in the final act, facilitates the ending by changing. Her conversation with Daisy, full of awkward asides to show what each is thinking, is all that prompts her to repent: "And to think I hold her happiness in my hands! His, too, poor fellow! Ah I can't hold it any longer!" Although she was the device by which the lovers were separated, by her sudden change she is also the device by which they are brought together. At the expense of character, Madame de Katkoff becomes the machinery by which necessary events may be made to occur.

Not only were the characters of Eugenio and Madame de

Katkov created for the play but the characters of a subplot were added. James attempted, through these characters, to add humor to the play although their primary function was as ficelle characters. The ficelle character, a device which James adopted from the French drama and which he used in much of his fiction is a person to whom the hero can talk and from whom information about the action of the story can be gained. For instance, in Daisy Miller: A Study, James uses Mrs. Costello to explain the social situation of the Miller family: "They are the sort of Americans that one does one's duty by not--not accepting." When it is necessary to summarize a passage of time, Winterbourne's aunt again is used:

Those people you were so devoted to last summer at Vevay have turned up here, courier and all, . . . They seem to have made several acquaintances but the courier continues to be the most intime. The young lady, however, is also very intimate with some third rate Italians, with whom she rackets about in a way that makes much talk.

Finally, when it becomes necessary to indicate the effect which Daisy had on Winterbourne, it is to Mrs. Costello that he confesses his lack of sympathy. In the play however, Mrs. Costello's usefulness as a ficelle character becomes more important and James gives her two companions, Miss Durant and Mr. Reverdy, with whom she can discuss the action. The conversation of these characters replaces, for the most part, the narration of the novel and it is through them that the audience is given information about characters and events. Since this is their primary function James did not find it necessary to draw them as more than caricatures. Mrs. Costello, whose

character is suggested in the novel as "a widow with a fortune; a person of much distinction, who frequently intimated that, if she were not so dreadfully liable to sick-headaches, she would probably have left a deeper impress upon her times." "She admitted that she was very exclusive; but, if he were acquainted with New York, he would see that one had to be." Attempting to enlarge upon her role, James succeeds, in the play in only creating an unreal character, overdrawn into a stereotype of the wealthy dowager, imperious and highblown. James saw in such a character an opportunity for humor which is necessary for the form of the well-made play. By her repeated lack of consideration for her companions, Miss Durant and Mr. Reverdy, i.e., her refusal to leave them alone together so that the marriage proposal may take place, and utilizing a wry suggestion from the novel that Mrs. Costello held court for the Americans in Rome while sitting "on a little portable stool at the base of one of the pilasters," by forcing Mr. Reverdy to carry at all times a camp stool on which the dowager never sits, James attempts to add the humor he felt necessary. He neglects, however, to give them full characterization, and although these characters fulfill their function of subplot and exposition they succeed in adding little else to the play.

Although in the novel his role is extremely minor and rather innocent, the Giovanelli of the play is much more sinister. In the novel Winterbourne claims that Giovanelli has little or no pretensions toward Daisy. "I rather doubt he has dreams of

marrying her," he tells his aunt. But in the play, Giovanelli is one of the conspirators and the man to whom Eugenio wishes to marry Daisy. Although he professes to be madly in love with her, Giovanelli's consternation is small, when in the final scene he loses Daisy to Winterbourne. He immediately turns to Eugenio and says, "You must find me another heiress . . . I have been thinking over my debts." Here is quite another character from the little man in the novel who quietly tells Winterbourne, "She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable. . . . And she was the most innocent."

James, then, sacrificed his fully developed characters of the novel to the stock characters of the well-made play; the reformed rake, the consumptive heroine, the noble but wronged young man, the sinister duchess, the mustachioed lawyer (or as in this case courier). Like the playwrights he admired, James relies upon the standard concepts of good and evil to provide sympathy or the lack of it for his characters. Blackmail, possession of a fatal letter and the seductive charms of Madame de Katkoff are all elements of the melodramatic. When Winterbourne explains his gallantry by his Americanism or when Daisy tells Winterbourne that he must go home to America, the references are meant to tug at the heart of the Madison Square audience and play upon its sentimentality toward home and patriotism. An automatic response against Eugenio is expected when Mrs. Costello exclaims of him " . . . he might smoke in our faces, as he does in theirs, and have his coffee with us

after dinner, as he does with them?" Again, the reaction expected is one of revulsion when Eugenio reveals his taste for beer and Giovanelli's for champagne. None of the other characters in the play ever touch liquor; only the villains are vulgar enough to have a predilection for what the audience is meant to consider base.

A typical device of the well-made play, James relies heavily on the use of asides and tirades. The scene in the garden at Vevay which he lifted almost entirely from the novel is an example of how the novelist overworked asides. In this scene James felt the necessity to include the authorial comment of the novel as well as the dialogue and the result is that Winterbourne, in asides for nearly all of his speeches in that scene, analyses his emotions and the scene in the same words as the narrator of the novel. When Randolph informs Daisy that Winterbourne is an American man, the narrator of the novel says, "It seemed to Winterbourne that he had been in a manner presented." Unable to trust the actor to convey this impression in the play, James causes Winterbourne in the play to say, in an aside, "It seems to me that I have been in a manner presented." Much of the thought in Winterbourne's mind is explained by the narrator of the novel while in the play Winterbourne is forced to explain in an aside, "Does she accept my acquaintance or not? It's rather sudden, and it wouldn't do at Geneva. But why else did she come and plant herself in front of me? She is the prettiest of the pretty, and I declare,

I'll risk it!" Although the scene in the garden at Vevay is the only one which is transferred relatively intact from the novel, scenes original with the play are heavily sprinkled with asides to explain each character's inner thought:

MISS DURANT. (*Aside*). [*Of Winterbourne*] Perfectly polite, but no enthusiasm! (*Aloud*.) I'm afraid Mr. Winterbourne isn't at liberty; he has other friends.

MRS. COSTELLO. He hasn't another aunt, I imagine!

WINTERBOURNE. (*Aside*.) Fortunately not!

MISS DURANT. Possibly we are indiscreet, as we just saw you talking to a lady.

WINTERBOURNE. Madame de Katkoff? She leaves this place today.

MRS. COSTELLO. You don't mean to follow her, I hope?

(*Aside*.) It's best to be firm with him at the start.

WINTERBOURNE. My dear aunt, I don't follow every woman I speak to.

MISS DURANT. (*Aside*.) Ah, that's meant for us! Mr. Reverdy is never so rude. I would thank him to come back.

James is more sparing in his use of tirades than the authors he was emulating. Daisy's speech at the beginning of the fifth scene of the second act wherein she pours forth information about her independent attitude, her love for Winterbourne, and his attitude toward her, not to mention plot exposition is, while contrived, typical of the drama James saw and admired. Here he gives, as was the tradition, the actress an opportunity to acquit herself admirably on the stage. He does so again in the last act when Daisy, recuperating from malaria, confesses to an empty stage that she has repented her frivolity.

Concerned with following those "few grave rigid laws"⁵⁰ James constructed the play precisely following the formula which

⁵⁰Edel, p. 35.

he felt would bring him fame, and since a well-made play must have no profound moral at the end James carefully avoided all but the smallest thesis. Although the villains are thwarted in their evil plan, they are not seriously punished, and Winterbourne, who has made the grave error of remaining too long away from home, plans to return to America. Evil is thwarted, mistakes are corrected, and no one is harmed in any way: a sugar-coated moral, not too strong and easily palatable. The final scene is so constructed that, again typical of the form, everyone, including the villain, is on stage at the curtain, forming the melodramatic tableau.

James's insistence upon following the rules of the well-made play when writing drama explains why in writing Daisy Miller: A Comedy he violated the original story and its characters. It also explains, in part, recalling the now dead plays of his mentors, Scribe and Sardou, why Daisy Miller: A Comedy as well as his other plays are unrepresentable. It does not explain, however, why the play, written when well-made plays were in vogue, was unacceptable to James's contemporaries. Madison Square rejected it and their reason was given by Daniel Frohman, manager of the theatre, who said he rejected the play because it was too literary. In other words it had too much talk and not enough action.⁵¹ The play does lack the scenic splendor which is typical of the genre. Daisy Miller: A Comedy takes

⁵¹Edel, p. 117.

place in the garden at Vevay, on the Pincian at Rome, and in a hotel suite in Rome. There are no burning buildings, no train wrecks or snow storms, no scenic machines at which an audience might marvel. However, Frohman's explanation is not enough since James was contemporaneous with men like Wilde and Shaw, who were writing plays of ideas, plays which in structure appear to follow the rules for a well-made play but which rely upon situation, wit, and emotion rather than action. The plays of these two dramatists as well as those of Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero are significant of a growing trend in nineteenth century drama, the thesis play.

Daisy Miller is not a social problem play and deals in no deep involved problem of the period, perhaps because James disliked this natural outgrowth of the well-made play.⁵²

Even though the play lacks the interest of a social problem it can, on the other hand, be compared to some of Oscar Wilde's plays, i.e., The Importance of Being Earnest, which generally lack action as well as a social thesis and rely for interest solely upon witty dialogue. This was the kind of play that James was attempting to write and a simple comparison of Wilde and James shows that whereas Wilde's plays are still being presented and are regularly anthologized, James's plays are rarely heard of. Leon Edel explains the difference:

⁵²In his discussion of Ibsen (Wade, p. 243), James condemns the thesis play because it lacks humor and deals with bourgeois subjects.

James's plays have more substance, weightier machinery, much plot, considerable drollery, less wit, but much sharper caricature. Wilde's plays are tinsel and paste-board; his people are mouthpieces for his cleverness. . . . The fundamental difference between Henry James and Oscar Wilde . . . so far as the failure of one and the success of the other in the theatre is concerned, resides in their approach to the public. Wilde remained true to the figure of himself he had long before projected--that of a cool, arrogant coiner of witty phrases and epigrams, utterly indifferent to his public. . . . The audience accepted his condescension because it could laugh at it. James could not be indifferent to his public. He was trying too hard to please it. The public or the manager who read his plays, sensed this strain, and could neither laugh at him, as at Wilde, nor sympathize with him. The result was fatal for James.⁵³

However, Edel not only overestimates James's qualities as a playwright, he oversimplifies the reasons for his failure. James's failure as a dramatist rests not upon the public's reaction to James's personality but upon a number of weaknesses, beyond his observance of the Scribean formula, which are inherent in his play.

James failed to recognize that formality which is acceptable in written dialogue is not always acceptable as dialogue for the stage. Thus conversations in Daisy Miller: A Comedy are carried on with extreme formality, as in the first scene between Eugenio and Madame de Katkoff:

EUGENIO. I comprehend the regret of Madame. It was in those six months that an incident occurred--(He pauses.)
 MME DE KATKOFF: An incident?
 EUGENIO. An incident which it is natural that Madame should not have desired to come to the knowledge of persons occupying a position, however humble, near Madame.

⁵³Edel, p. 55.

MME DE KATKOFF. (*Aside.*) He is more than impertinent-- he is dangerous. (*Aloud.*) You are very audacious. You took away a great deal of money.

EUGENIO. Madame appears to have an abundance.

The formality of the language in this exchange might be explained as an attempt to simulate a translation of a foreign tongue into English, an effort to characterize Eugenio and Madame de Katkoff. However, the incidence of this style is too great and even the Americans in the play speak with excessive formality:

MRS. WALKER. You would never imagine what has brought me! I have come in pursuit of little Daisy Miller.

MRS. COSTELLO. And you have brought my nephew to help you!

WINTERBOURNE. A walk in such charming company is a privilege not to be lost. Perhaps, dear aunt, you can give us news.

MRS. COSTELLO. Of that audacious and desperate person?

Dear me, yes. We met her just now, on the arm of a dreadful man.

MRS. WALKER. Oh, we are too late then. She is lost!

Evidently James saw very little need to change the style of writing dialogue from one form to another. The words being said have been changed to suit the new plot of the play but a comparison of dialogue in the novel and the play shows that formality of diction remains constant:

"Well," he said, "I am not a courier and yet she was very charming to me."

"You had better have said at first," said Mrs. Costello, with dignity, "that you had made her acquaintance."

"We simply met in the garden, and we talked a bit."

"Tout bonnement! And pray what did you say?"

"I said I should take

WINTERBOURNE. . . . Give her a moment's grace.
MRS. COSTELLO. It won't be for us to give her grace: It will be for society.
WINTERBOURNE. Ah, but you are society, you know. She wants immensely to know you.
MRS. COSTELLO. Is that why she is flinging herself at you?
WINTERBOURNE. (*Very gravely.*) Listen to me seriously, please.
The poor little girl has given me a great mark--a very touch-
mark of confidence.

the liberty of introducing her to my admirable aunt."

"I am much obliged to you."

"It was to guarantee my respectability."

"And pray who is to guarantee hers?"

"Ah, you are cruel!" said the young man.

"She's a very nice girl."

. I wish to present her to you,
 . because I wish someone to
 . answer for my honor.

. MRS. COSTELLO. And pray, who
 . is to answer for hers?

. WINTERBOURNE. Oh, I say,
 . you're cruel.

Certain words in all the above passages, though they economically convey the meaning of the speech, are not generally used in the language of conversation. This trend toward formality of conversation in the dialogue of James's plays caused Shaw, as drama critic for the Times, to write:

There is a literary language which is perfectly intelligible to the eye yet utterly unintelligible to the ear even when it is easily speakable by the mouth . . . a writer who has always worked for publication alone is likely to fail in direct proportion to his inveterate practice and his virtuosity. . . . But the disastrous plays of James and the stage failures of novelists obviously much more richly endowed than many of the successful playwrights with whom they have tried to compete, suggest that they might have succeeded if only they had understood that as the pen and the viva vox are different instruments, their parts must be scored accordingly.⁵⁴

Thus one might say "I see Miss Miller in the distance," but it is highly unlikely that he would say as Mr. Reverdy does, "I descry in the distance the adorable Miss Miller," or one might say "I don't wish to disturb your mother," rather than "I should be very sorry to incommode your mother," as Winterbourne tells Daisy. Even in the most "exclusive society," as Mrs. Costello

⁵⁴George Bernard Shaw, "Mr. Shaw on Printed Plays," Times Literary Supplement, May 17, 1923.

purports to be, conversational diction is not so carefully chosen as is the diction of this play.

In a novel James could create characters who all spoke with the same careful English because description by the author characterized them and made them stand out as different. The difficulty for James in stage dialogue was that he was blocked from giving authorial comment. He compensated for this restriction by putting his own words into the mouths of the characters he was creating. The result was that rather than differentiating between characters by their dialogue, characters are made to describe each other. In other words, James intrudes his presence upon the characters and therefore they lack differentiation. Dialogue of characters becomes interchangeable because the character is not speaking; but the author is.

Criterion for a good play does not of necessity demand realistic dialogue but it does demand that the speeches are consistent with the characters saying them. In Daisy Miller: A Study the speeches and characters are not consistent and dialogue varies very little from one character to another. Each character speaks in the same carefully chosen English, with the same language pattern, and therefore characterization must be made through asides and narration, as in the scene between Madame de Katkoff and Daisy:

MME DE KATKOFF. (Aside.) Poor little thing, she hates me! But she doesn't hate him. (Aloud.) I'm a stranger as you say; but I should be very glad to become a little less of one.

DAISY. Why should you want to know me? I am not of your age.

MME DE KATKOFF. (Aside, smiling.) She hates me indeed! (Aloud.) I should be tempted to say that we might know each other a little as mother and daughter--if I hadn't heard that you are already the devoted daughter of a devoted mother.

Often this characterization amounts to a self justification or self elevation on the part of the character, reflecting James's opinion that a character in a play should be above the mundane.⁵⁵

Daisy says:

Well I haven't had a foreign education, and I don't see that I'm any the worse for that. If I'd had a foreign education, I might as well give up! I shouldn't be able to breathe, for fear I was breathing wrong. There seem to be so many ways, over here! But I only know one way, and I don't see why I should learn the others when there are people who do like--who do like--what I do.

James did not trust his audience to understand his play nor did he trust his actors to correctly portray his characters. By using one or several characters to describe another, or as in the above speech, the character himself, James made certain that neither actor nor audience could misinterpret his intent.

Eugenio's speeches, for instance, are often explanations of character or character function:

Is Madame acquainted with Lugano? If she should go that way, I recommend the Hotel Washington: always our Americans, you see! The Russians? They are the most dangerous people I know, and we gentlemen who take charge of families know everything.

James has insured, by repeating in this speech information already given, that the audience understands that Madame de Katkoff is mysterious and has an interest in Americans as well

⁵⁵Again, in James's discussion of Ibsen (Wade, p. 255), he condemns Ibsen for dealing with "homely and unaesthetic society."

as what Eugenio's duty as a courier is. In other speeches James gives information about character which might have been shown by careful characterization: "Let me speak to you very frankly. Some eight years ago, when you were thirty years old, you were living at Dresden." In this speech, Madame de Katkoff is established as a woman of thirty-eight. Had James been skillful in his characterization the age difference between her and Winterbourne would have been revealed through attitudes toward one another rather than in this blatant explanation.

Conversational speech, which is what James is attempting to write, does not generally contain involved parenthetical phrases of explanation. Yet, James relies almost solely on speeches like the following to give exposition:

It is for this reason that I approached her with utmost deliberation. I recognized her three days ago, the evening she arrived at the hotel, and I pointed her out to Mrs. Miller as a Russian lady of great distinction, whose husband I had formerly the honor to serve in a very confidential position. Mrs. Miller has a daughter even more amiable than herself, and this young lady was profoundly impressed with the distinguished appearance of Madame.

Practically all the information given in this speech is repeated at least once and sometimes twice in the remainder of the play. Such a speech, although it is delivered to Madame de Katkoff herself, lacks direction and might have been delivered to any one of the characters in the play. It is in fact, what in a novel would be authorial exposition, written solely as explanation to the reader. The passage is packed with parenthetical qualifications just as many of the speeches of the play are.

Such pauses in conversation for explanation slow the action of the play.

Action is again slowed or even halted by the novelist's technique of explaining certain characteristics of personalities by extended similies and metaphors. That is not to suggest that good dramatic dialogue does not make use of similar techniques; in fact quite the opposite. However, James takes time from the action to allow the characters to play with an image; the image is one which usually does not coincide with their characters but seemingly it pleased the author. Eugenio, for instance, asks Giovanelli:

You've seen the bareback rider turn a somersault through the paper hoops? It's a very pretty feat, and it brings him great applause; but half the effect depends upon the poor devil--whom no one notices--who is perched upon the edge of the ring. If he didn't hold the hoop with a great deal of skill, the bareback rider would simply come down on his nose. You turn your little somersaults, Signor Cavaliere, and my young lady claps her hands; but all the while I'm holding the hoop!

Giovanelli cleverly answers him, "If I'm not mistaken, that office, at the circus, is usually performed by the clown." Homely images that might be plausible in the speech of some of the characters become grandiose as James attempts to suggest qualities of character in the same fashion as he does in prose. Madame de Katkoff's comparison of Winterbourne to a German stove is one example: the Americans' description of Randolph another:

MRS. COSTELLO. It doesn't matter, because the head of the family is the little boy. He orders the dinner; he has the best seat in the carriage.
REVERDY. He's the most amusing little specimen. He has the heart of a patriot in the body of a--(Hesitates for a word.)

MISS DURANT. In the body of a grasshopper!

REVERDY. He hops a good deal, or rather, I should say, he flies; for there is a good deal of the spread-eagle about him.

MISS DURANT. He leaves his toys all over the hotel; I suppose you would say his plumes.

REVERDY. Well he's a dauntless American infant; a child of nature and freedom.

Here, Randolph grows from a grasshopper, a comparison which is not unlikely, to an American eagle, a symbol of nature and freedom. The image is stretched out of proportion as the characters elaborate it. The passage lacks wit as a saving grace and the purpose of the image is lost as the author attempts, by expansion of it, to be clever.

In spite of these images, the dialogue lacks concreteness. In other words, speeches are both passive and abstract, as are the ideas they are to convey. Conversation lacks color because the nouns are not concrete and refer more to abstractions rather than to people, things and events. Verbs used often express no very strong action and therefore the dialogue seems static. The total effect of such dialogue is illustrated by Winterbourne's speech: "Does she accept my acquaintance or not? It's rather sudden, and it wouldn't do at Geneva. But why else did she come and plant herself in front of me? She is the prettiest of the pretty and I declare I'll risk it!" In passages which have the tone of description, there is also a certain lack of solidity about the content. Mrs. Costello, describing the dangers of Rome, is rather vague:

My dear young lady, with these unscrupulous foreigners one can never be sure. You know as well as I what becomes of the reputation of a girl who shows herself in

this place, at this hour, with all the rank and fashion of Rome about her, with no more responsible escort than a gentleman renowned for his successes!

What specifically the "prettiest of the pretty" means or what happens to a girl's reputation when she shows herself among the rank and fashion (what rank and fashion means is also unclear) of Rome is left unexplained, and the audience is to infer what it wishes. Even when definite nouns and adjectives are used the speeches sound much as Giovannelli's blatant description: "Well, I shan't complain if I find myself at a table with you in a dusky corner of that picturesque little cook-shop, where the ceiling is black, and the walls are brown, and the floor is red!"

James devotes much of the dialogue in Daisy Miller: A Comedy to explaining what has occurred or what is about to occur. Winterbourne inconsequentially explains to the waiter: "I arrived an hour ago, by the train; but I was dusty, and I had to have a bath. Then while I dressed, to save time, I had my breakfast brought to my room." In this passage attention to detail is not only unnecessary but not in keeping with Winterbourne's described character and therefore halts the action for unnecessary explanation. However, description of this kind is used for all the action of the play. Characters on stage never do anything; they only talk about it. James has opportunity for action in each of the acts. At the Pincian in Rome, Mrs. Walker and Daisy might have a similar confrontation as the one in the novel. Instead, most of the act is cluttered with

entrances and exits by characters from the subplot who talk about action occurring off stage. Again, in the third act, James makes the occasion the Carnival and has opportunity for some vivid scenic affect. However, he sets the whole act in a hotel suite and characters only discuss the gaiety which is taking place outside:

MRS. COSTELLO. Down into the street--to be trampled to death? I have no desire to be butchered to make a Roman holiday.

REVERDY. (Aside.) They would find you a tough old morsel! (Aloud.) It's the last night of the Carnival, and a peculiar license prevails.

MRS. COSTELLO. I'm happy to hear it's the last night. Their tooting and piping and fiddling hasn't stopped for a week and my poor old head has been racked with pain.

Again, the moment which is highly dramatic in the novel, Winterbourne and Daisy's confrontation in the Colosseum, is passed over slightly in the play:

REVERDY. Poor little butterfly! Don't speak harshly of her; she is lying ill with Roman fever.

MRS. COSTELLO. Since her visit to the Colosseum, in the cool of the evening, with the inveterate Giovanelli?

Thus, action which has taken place off stage is discussed by characters on stage: crises which occur rarely occur on the stage and conflicts are discussed by the characters involved in a cool and collected manner. The question may be asked: if characters on the stage are rarely stimulated, by what may the audience be stimulated?

Limited action combined with lengthy expositional dialogue and formality of diction force Daisy Miller: A Comedy to be slow paced. Characterization which is not self-explanatory,

extended similies and metaphors which are not in keeping with those characters using them and speeches which lack solidity of ideas all help keep the play from being dramatic. James, writing drama with these faults and restricted in plot by his insistence upon following the well-made play form, had many disadvantages to overcome. In the dramatic interval in James's life which was to follow his composition of Daisy Miller: A Comedy, James succeeded in lessening some of these weaknesses. However, he still clung faithfully to the well-made play form and he never really succeeded in eliminating the novelist from his dramas. Critics contemporary with James wrote of him that literary men were welcome in the theatre "provided they bring their literature with them."⁵⁶ Still others recognized that James was restricting himself and one wrote: ". . . we wish very much that Mr. James would write some farces to please himself and not to please the stage."⁵⁷ William Archer, in the Daily Chronicle, wrote:

Mr. James has never taken up a natural and unconstrained attitude toward the stage. . . . If he will only clear his mind of critical cant . . . and write solely for the ideal audience within his own breast, he will certainly produce works of art and not improbably successful plays.⁵⁸

But James, whether for fear of failure or because he respected

⁵⁶F. W. Dupee, Henry James, (New York, 1951), p. 169.

⁵⁷Edel, p. 346.

⁵⁸Ibid.

the pièce bien fait, was unable to "clear his mind of critical cant". In the face of criticism he continued to construct mechanically precise plays lacking the vigor of his fiction.

In turning to the theatre, James was searching for a more valid art form. He found instead restrictions within which the super subtleties that were his forte were lost. His novels are particularly concerned with the subjective workings of a character's mind, and thus James found it difficult to confine his writing to the strict objective necessity of the stage--doubly strict because of the impositions made on it by his acceptance of an artificial form. On the other hand, when he returned to fiction, James continued to work with the dramatic method:

I come back yet again and again to my only seeing it in the dramatic way--as I can only see everything and anything now. . . . I come back as I say, I all throbbingly and yearningly and passionately, oh mon bon, come back to this way that is clearly the only one in which I can do anything now, and that will open out to me more and more, and that has overwhelming pleading all beautifully in the breast.⁵⁹

In this fashion he created novels which have lent themselves to successful adaptation for the stage, making his inability to adapt his own novel, Daisy Miller: A Study, ironic. Daisy Miller: A Comedy is illustration to James's observation:

The theatre is so apt to be outward and the universal to be inward, that in spite of their enjoying scarce more common ground than fish and fowl, they often manage to peck at each other with fatal results. The outward insists on the inwards becoming its own substance and the inward resists, struggles, bites, kicks, tries at least

⁵⁹Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 348.

to drag the outward down. The disagreement may be a very pretty quarrel and an interesting literary case; it is only not likely to be a successful play.⁶⁰

James made the struggle between the "outward" and the "universal" even greater by his strict adherence to the formula play. This, added to the already strict rigor of writing stage drama, conflicted with earlier learned styles of writing for the novel. Thus the disparity between James's novel and his play rests equally upon his use of the well-made play form and his inability to remain objective; to refrain from commenting through his characters as a novelist.

⁶⁰Wade, p. 315.

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HENRY JAMES'S FAILURE AS A DRAMATIST
AS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS ADAPTATION OF
DAISY MILLER FOR THE STAGE

by

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THE ABSTRACT

Fascinated by the drama, Henry James wrote a number of plays, all of which were relatively unsuccessful. Reasons for the failure rest in large measure upon James's theories of playwriting. James felt that the French dramatists of the nineteenth century had learned all the secrets of playwriting, and he carefully studied their theories before writing his own drama. He particularly admired the formula for the well-made play, and it was this formula which he used in writing his dramas. A well-made play usually involves a naively good hero and heroine struggling against a worldly villain. The struggle is usually a battle of wits through which the hero, having received vital information by some contrivance of the author, defeats the villain. The formula had been in use in England and on the Continent for nearly twenty years when James began writing drama, and he adopted it not only because he admired French drama but because the well-made play was a successful formula for play making. Since audiences already accepted the well-made play, James, who desired from the theatre fame and fortune, as well as satisfaction from the art form, wrote what he felt the audience desired. However, he lacked contact with his audience and condescended to them.

With these attitudes, James attempted to adapt his novel Daisy Miller: A Study for the stage, rewriting the plot exactly to fit the well-made play formula. Daisy Miller: A

Comedy no longer deals with the lack of communication between two societies but with an intrigue on the part of the Millers' courier to separate Daisy Miller and Winterbourne. Not only the plot structure but the characters, have been changed and assume the characteristics of many of those found in nineteenth century drama.

James's adherence to the well-made play form is not alone responsible for the failure of Daisy Miller: A Comedy. His previous training as an author of novels and short stories is also partially to blame. He was too accustomed to explaining thoughts, ideas and character as an omniscient narrator and he continues in Daisy Miller: A Comedy to comment on character and action. He labors to explain every detail with the same minute care that he would give in a novel and forces speeches to say what the author insists must be said, thus violating character. Again, as a novelist he could use formal dialogue, but in writing drama he neglects to change the dialogue from formal to conversational English. Since all of the characters speak in the same formal style they lack differentiation.

Daisy Miller: A Comedy, then, failed as a drama primarily because James insisted upon sacrificing his own ideas to the well-made play form and because he was unable to shed his role as a novelist who carefully explains; that is, he was unable to transform himself into a dramatist who, by suggestion, allows action to speak for itself.